

# Perspectives in Military History

49<sup>th</sup> Annual Lecture Series

## “Ashley’s War” and the Cultural Support Teams in Afghanistan

Gayle Lemmon

Author and Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations

In 2010, the United States Army created Cultural Support Teams (CST), a secret pilot program to insert women alongside Special Operations Soldiers battling in Afghanistan. The women of the CSTs put themselves in the line of fire to build relationships with the women of both the Afghan mountains and the tough streets of the Afghan cities. At 7:15 PM on Wednesday, November 18, 2015, the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC) in Carlisle, Pennsylvania will present a lecture by Gayle Lemmon, author and Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations, based on her *New York Times* bestselling book, *Ashely’s War*. Lemmon will discuss the complexities of war, as well as tell the stories of the war in Afghanistan through the eyes of the members of the team. The talk will also cover why the Army believed women could play a unique role on Special Ops teams.

In *Ashley’s War*, Lemmon uses on-the-ground reporting to understand the complexities of war to tell the story of CST-2, a unit of women hand-picked by the Army to serve in the highly specialized and challenging role. The pioneers of CST-2 proved, for the first time, women are physically and mentally tough enough to become part of the Special Operations community. This professional acceptance, came with the hefty price of personal loss and social isolation; the only people who really understood them were the other women of CST-2.

Gayle Tzemach Lemmon is a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of The *New York Times* best sellers *Ashley’s War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield* and *The Dressmaker of Khair Khana*. She is also a contributor to Atlantic Media’s *Defense One* website. In 2004, she left ABC News to earn her MBA at Harvard, where she began writing about women entrepreneurs in conflict and post-conflict zones, including Afghanistan and Rwanda. Following her MBA study, she served as a vice president at the investment firm PIMCO. She has written for *Newsweek*, the *Financial Times*, and the *International Herald Tribune*, as well as for the World Bank and Harvard Business School. She gave a TED Talk on *Ashley’s War* and all-women Special Ops teams in May 2015, following on her 2011 TED Talk on the importance of investing in global entrepreneurs. A Fulbright Scholar and Robert Bosch Fellow, Lemmon speaks Spanish, German, French, and is conversant in Farsi.

**DATE: Wednesday, November 18, 2015**

**TIME: Doors open at 6:30 PM and the talk begins at 7:15 PM**

**PLACE: USAHEC, Visitor and Education Center, Multi-Purpose Room**

**For updates and any last-minute changes in “Perspectives” meeting times and places, please check the USAHEC homepage: [www.USAHEC.org](http://www.USAHEC.org) or call the Information Desk: (717) 245-3972.**